

Not My Way

number five in a nine-part series on what we believe

October 10 & 11, 2009

Drama: Faith in Christ is the only ticket to heaven.

Intro 1:

Some of the things we trust in end up *popping*. We place our confidence in things that are *flimsy and fragile* and they *disappear* when we need them most. It's the same for *this life* and for *eternal life*.

We've been talking about our foundations: what we believe and why. That drama gets us ready for a message on how we get to God.

Prayer:

Intro 2:

My parents moved during my first year away at college. They didn't move far, just from La Jolla to the next town north, Del Mar, but *they didn't give me an address or directions* to the new house. *I still think this oversight was intentional*.

At the end of my first quarter, I wanted to get home for Christmas break. I didn't have a car but I was able to bum a ride the 200 miles down from Santa Barbara. It was late at night and I was trying to find their new place. I had some familiarity with the area, but *I didn't know the way home*. The houses were spread out and it seemed like we were in a forest. It was really sad. I was still only 17 and I was lost.

My only hope was that a friend's dad owned a gas station in Del Mar and *I did know* how to get there. He was a gruff European man of few words. As we drove down, I imagined what it would be like to ask him for directions.

There are two ways you can take.

Okay, which way do most people take?

This way, but it won't get you there.

You said there are two ways I could go! But *only one way works*? Why would I choose a road that never arrives?

You didn't ask me which way works, you asked which way is more popular.

T - It is the same way with getting to our *heavenly home*: there are two ways you can take but *only one way* gets there. ***In Matt 7:13,14, Jesus contrasted two ways of salvation.***

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Let's consider the contrast:

1. My Way (our man-made method)...is religion; humanity's efforts to reach God.

There is *something inside* leading us all to acknowledge that *someone* is over us. But we want to define him *our own way* and construct the path to him *on our own terms*. People try to make it to God by all sorts of means. And the alternative to asking for help is to try harder - *that's religion*. The problem with this is that our efforts don't reach high enough. ***Is 64:6 - our righteous acts are like filthy rags.*** Man made methods are like so many balloons - they pop. On the positive side, the broad way is wide enough that people can enter it without ever laying down their baggage.

2. The High Way (God's plan of salvation)...is relationship; God's decision to reach humanity through Jesus who came here and died for us and who lives today.

How different is real, biblical Christianity from man-made means of reaching God? Very! The fundamental difference is in direction! Religion stretches and strains *up* to God, but Christianity comes *down*. It is *from above* down to us. ***Rom 1:17 In the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed.... Phil 3:9 Paul's hope is not in having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.***

The way of salvation is not what we would expect. God didn't set things up so that it depends on our performance. It seems like the rest of life sure it. But [Tit. 3:5 - he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.](#)

God's way isn't about hoop-jumping. It involves an actual relationship. This is because our Savior is alive! The uniqueness of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is available.

3. My Way (our man-made method)...is well-travelled; it is the more common way to go. It is a wide gate, a broad road and many take it.

Relying on ourselves is the American way. It is human nature to want to do it on our own. And it is politically correct to believe in what is *inclusive* and to think of *tolerance* as the highest virtue. All this means the wide road is well-traveled. It is the *normal* way to go. People say, *I'll come to God any way I want. I'll do it my way.* Popular thought, but it doesn't work that way.

The *natural* way to approach God is to believe it all depends on you. This is in contrast to *the supernatural way*, which depends on what Jesus did.

There was a church back in Bible times that thought they could be self-made spiritually. Paul didn't have gentle words for them: [Gal. 3:1 You foolish Galatians!... 3 After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?](#) It can't be done. While relying on your own efforts is common, *it doesn't work.*

4. The High Way (God's plan of salvation)...is a narrow road; it is an unpopular path.

It involves *admitting the truth*, which is *very* unpopular. The truth is that the standard is too high for us to meet with *self-righteousness*. [1 Pet 1:16 - Be holy, because I am holy.](#) *That's a problem: we can't get it together and live in a way that is acceptable to a holy God. [James 2:10 - For](#)*

[whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.](#) So our situation is bleak until we admit the unpopular truth that we need help.

Jesus called the way of salvation narrow, and it certainly *seems that way* these days. Appeal to an absolute standard of morality and risk being called a bigot. Say someone is wrong and be labeled intolerant. Suggest there is only one way to God and you sound arrogant. But Jesus wasn't worried about these accusations or about his popularity. He said, [narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.](#) It is *not the popular path.*

5. My Way (our man-made method)...is mismarked and therefore leads to disappointment.

The sign doesn't say, *"This way leads to destruction."* Both ways are marked with arrows pointing up. People set out on this broad road with the hope that it will take them where they want to go. They expect enlightenment. They set out for comfort and seek peace. But there is disappointment ahead because it doesn't take anyone to the top. It is *mismarked*. It makes promises it can't fulfill.

6. The High Way (God's plan of salvation)...is misrepresented and therefore easy to miss.

We had a conversation at our staff meeting: *Did you see that show on TV? It made believers look like idiots.* Someone could have said, *What show? They all seem to have this agenda.* We could cite new examples of *Christian bashing* every week. And if those outside of Christianity aren't calling us stupid then we take over for them, making ourselves look stupid. Christians are adept as misrepresenting Christ.

We're studying [Romans](#) in Rooted. This week we come to chapter 2 where Paul gets tough. [Rom 2:24 - outsiders reject God because of your hypocrisy!](#) (BTW: we've had between 50-70 young adults come out for worship and the Word at 7:00 on Sunday nights.)

When you think of the way Christianity is smeared in the media and how poorly we make it look, it is a miracle that anyone finds the right road anymore. It is as if we're more in the business of *setting up roadblocks* than fulfilling the great commission of leading others onto *the high way!*

7. My Way (our man-made method)...is a dead end road. It leads to destruction. It doesn't lead where you want to go. Prov 14:12 - there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. As religious as anyone gets, there is still the problem with sin. Is 59:2 - Your sins have separated you from your God. Human solutions don't solve the problem. Eph 2:8,9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Back to **Matt. 7**. With this contrast, Jesus brings his *sermon on the mount* to a crossroads. All imaginable ways to God come down to one of these two roads: it is either my way or the high way. Jesus emphasized the contrast all through the end of his sermon. There are only 2 roads, gates, ways, destinations, groups, kinds of trees, kinds of fruit, kinds of people, kinds of builders, foundations, houses, and results. The contrast is between what man tries to achieve and what God has accomplished. Between our works and God's grace. Jesus concluded his talk with by warning his listeners not to be deceived. He wants you to know which way you're going.

8. The High Way (God's plan of salvation)...is the only way that leads to life.

Jn 3:16. Life is in his *only* son. He's the only way. Jn 14:6. He didn't say *I point to the way*, or *I teach the way*, or *I bestow the way*, or *I am a way*, but I am the way! Paul wrote, There is one mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5): Jesus

Christ! Peter taught, There is one name by which we may be saved (Acts 4:12): **Jesus Christ!**

Why isn't there another way? That's the wrong question! *Why is there a way at all?* God sent one Savior and that's all we need. The way is narrow, it is through Jesus alone, but it is open to all. All may come in!

What are you going to do with this?

Concl:

Notice Jesus doesn't say *consider the gate*, or *admire the gate*, but enter the gate. It is a choice. There are people who admire Jesus, but don't *choose to approach God* through him. He is the narrow way. John 10:9 - I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.

A choice must be made. And it is choice we read of all through the Bible. Dt. 30:19,20 - I've set before you the two options - life and death. Make a choice. Josh 24:15 - choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...

1 Kings 18:21 - How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him...

Jer 21:8 - I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death... Which way will you choose?

Come to God on his terms - through Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

After my prayer:

This message has been about how to begin the Christian life. Jesus said, you must be born again. Once you come alive spiritually, it is time to grow. Let me briefly mention three opportunities to mature in your faith:

1. A core group of people in Silverton will be forming a **new Growth Group**. These groups meet in homes during weeknights and help their members grow in spiritual maturity. Several go through the sermon notes.

2. A **new support group** for men called “Faithful and True” begins October 19th. It’s all about sexual purity. They will be using a workbook that get them into the Word. You can email the group leaders.

3. A **new Next Step class**, our introduction to membership. They will meet the next two Sundays during the 10:45 service. This is a way for you to express commitment to God and to his people here at Dayspring.

Sign up by marking the communication card.

4. If you’ve made a **new commitment** to Jesus or have a need, come up for prayer with a team member.

More Meat

The following thoughts and paragraphs are related to this message, but didn’t make the final edit into the notes I used in the service. I hope you find this interesting as you wade through a lot of random ideas I’ve written.

Consider for a moment the history of his interaction with us. A holy God created people for the purpose of relating obediently to him. He gave the gift of life and an ideal setting. He gave his creatures great freedom with only one restriction and they were warned of the consequences of rebellion. The penalty was forfeiture of the gift of life. Did God have this right? Sure, he had total authority!

The people disobeyed but he didn't immediately kill them. He began a plan to redeem them without compromising his holiness. He did all he could do to bring them back to himself. Time and time again their disobedience was flagrant. They were outrageous in their rejection of his ways, yet he constantly reached out. He picked a man and raised up a nation through which to bless all. They violated the law and mocked his

messengers. He disciplined them and delivered them. His ultimate act of redemption was met with the ultimate act of rejection. He himself came to visit this place. God took on flesh in the person of his Son and was tortured, killed!

It is a history of God being dishonored. His creatures invented religions and worshipped things made. Yet God offers life through the death of his Son.

He hasn’t done enough? Why isn't there another way? These are the wrong questions! Why is there a way at all? God sent one Savior and that's all we need. And that is what we have in Jesus Christ!

Maybe (summarize?): Jesus wants his followers to know that *he is the only way*. So how are we to view all the other religions? Picture it like this: God has asked us to walk down to the Newport jetty, take a flying leap, and swim to Hawaii. This, of course, is impossible. *All fall short. The standard is beyond us.* What the world’s religions do is to come along and help people do better. Many religions *teach very good things* about how to live. According to our illustration, they teach you *a better stroke* so you will get a *little farther, but these religions are still giving swimming lessons to drowning men.*

In a way, the best approach is to recognize the distance and give up quickly, calling out for a Savior. That’s when your eyes turn up and you’re able to see that God has provided a bridge: the cross of Jesus. We can’t get to Hawaii on our own. We can’t do what God requires. But he has sent a Savior who bridges the gap. Other religions? *They can be helpful, but no alternate belief system leads to life, because we can’t reach God by our power.*

Religions give swimming lessons to drowning men. You don't fail to make it by being *affiliated with the wrong group*, but by *not crossing over on the cross*.

Unloving? Consider what he's done. [John 3:16](#). Look at the cross, the ultimate sacrifice.

Unfair? This demonstrates a misunderstanding about God. [Gen 18:25 - The judge of all the earth will deal justly.](#) [2 Sam 22:3 - As for God, his way is blameless.](#)

Consider his authority. In Matthew 20:15 we read the rhetorical question, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I wish with what is my own?" Doesn't the maker have a right over that which he makes? Rom 9:20,21 uses the common illustration of the potter and clay. "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" He can do what he wants to do! God didn't have to save anyone. "His sovereignty rules over all" is we read in Psalm 103:19.

His compassion also sheds light on what is fair and what is not. Though God has full authority, he is not aloof. Listen to Psalm 103:8-13 concerning the compassion of God (read it). He did not treat us as our sins deserve, he treated Christ as our sins deserve. We do not have to bear our own guilt and shame. He bore our guilt and shame. When we start thinking that God is unfair, we are on the wrong track. We are barking up the wrong tree. To see the compassion of God, look at the cross.

God's compassion has been shown in his history. God hasn't offered salvation to only one culture. The Bible has many examples of people saved by God despite limited opportunities to hear. Consider Rahab in Josh 2; Naanam in 2 Kings 5; Ethiopian in Acts 8. In Acts 10:34 we read "God

does not show partiality." And at the end of the story, in Rev. 5:9 we read that some from every tribe, tongue and nation will be brought into the family of God. God will make sure that those who will repent have the opportunity to hear.

How about his desire? What does God want? Here are some powerful verses. 1 Timothy 2:4: God "desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." That is what he wants. 2 Peter 3:9: He is "...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." Ezekiel 33:11: "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.'"

One more point about God which will help you to understand that he is the one with the rights: he is sovereign. He is in control. Psalm 115:3 is one of the least pleasant Scriptures I know, "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases."

You talk about rights? We hear so much about animal rights. We hear about civil rights, women's rights and gay rights. Just a second here! How about God's rights? Put that on your bumper sticker. We owe Him allegiance.

God's holiness is grossly underestimated, as is our fallenness. In Isaiah 6 we read of God as holy, holy, holy. Again in Rev 4. He is so holy that every being will fall down and say, "Woe is me!"

His Love: John 3:16; Rom. 5:8. God is love!

His Justice: Acts 17:31 - "He will judge in righteousness." 2 Sam. 22:3 - "As for God, His way is blameless." Ps. 51:4 - He is "blameless when He judges..." God wrote the book on "fair."

His Holiness: Rev. 4:8. His holiness is grossly underestimated, as is our fallen-ness. We ask, "How can a loving God allow rebellious creatures to spend eternity without Him?" But we should ask, "How can a holy God allow rebellious creatures to spend eternity with Him?" When confronted with God's holy majesty, we should echo Isaiah, "Woe is me!"

His Authority: Mt. 20:15 - "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I wish with what is my own?" He is Creator! Rom. 9:20,21 - "Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" Who are we to accuse Him?

His Independence: Ps. 115:3 - "God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases." God is not bound by our petty plans. Ps. 103:19 - "His sovereignty rules."

His Compassion: Ps. 103:8-14. He cares about us!

His History: God has not been predisposed to offer salvation to only one culture. Acts 10:34 - "God does not show partiality." The Bible has many examples of people saved despite limited opportunities to hear: Rahab, Naaman, the Ethiopian, etc. He has been fair in the past and He will be in the future as well. Rev. 5:9 says that some from every tribe, tongue and nation will be brought into the family of God.

His Desire: 1 Tim. 2:4 - God "desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." Ez. 18:23,32 - He takes no pleasure in the death of those without Him. 2 Pet. 3:9 - God is "...not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." When all the facts are in, He will be vindicated.

The whole point of the standard is that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God (Romans 3:19).

Rom 3:20 no flesh will be justified in his sight by the works of the law.

Luke 13:23,24. Demanding. No deviation. No departure. It takes discipline.

Sounds too easy! But it wasn't easy for Jesus. *It cost him everything* to give the gift we freely receive.